

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Judge Imposes \$1.77 million in Fines Against Far West Water & Sewer Correction

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Jan. 27, 2006) A Yuma judge today imposed \$1.77 million in criminal fines against Far West Water & Sewer in a case resulting in the death of James Gamble, a Yuma sewer worker, and injury to his colleague, Nathan Garrett, in 2001. [The fine was broken down to \\$500,000 for the three convictions resulting from Mr. Gamble's death and \\$500,000 for the two convictions resulting from Mr. Garrett's injuries, plus a surcharge of \\$770,000. The judge also awarded over \\$150,000 in restitution to Mr. Garrett and Mr. Gamble's family, which will be paid from the fine.](#)

In October 2005, a Yuma County jury found Far West guilty of negligent homicide of James Gamble; endangerment of James Gamble; knowing violation of a safety standard causing the death of an employee, Gamble; aggravated assault of Nathan Garrett; and endangerment of Garrett. Far West also faced a manslaughter charge for the death of Gary Lanser, an employee of a Far West contractor, Santec Corporation. The jury acquitted Far West of manslaughter for Lanser's death and was hung on the charge of negligent homicide.

In 2001, Gamble, Garrett and Lanser were working to remove a plug blocking sewage in a sewer tank near Mesa del Sol Golf Course in Yuma. Gamble entered the tank to remove the plug while Connie Charles, a Far West Water & Sewer foreperson, turned on a pump running sewage into the tank through another line. Gamble inhaled sewage gas and immediately collapsed into the tank. Garrett, Lanser and then Charles entered the tank to attempt a rescue. All three were overcome by the sewage gas. Gamble and Lanser died, and Garrett suffered damage to his lungs.

Witnesses for the State testified the air in the sewer tank had not been tested during the day, the workers were not properly trained, safety equipment was not available or used, and required safety and rescue procedures were not followed.

Assistant Attorneys General Christina Fitzpatrick and Mark Horlings prosecuted this case.

###